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~~determining whether any packets are received within a designated time period after the step of issuing a join command; and~~

~~if any packets are received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is joined to the multicast group address; otherwise, if any packets are not received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is not joined to the multicast group address.~~

3. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the packet is one of a test packet and a payload packet.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the payload packet comprises any one of an audio payload, a data payload, a video payload, and a multimedia payload.

5. (Amended) The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of receiving at least one test packet before receiving a payload packet.

6. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2 comprising the step of receiving a call grant message comprising the multicast group address.

7. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the step of issuing a join command comprises, sending an IGMP Join message to one or more network devices.

10. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of, if the first host is determined to not be joined to the multicast group address,

issuing a leave command to the one or more network devices; and
re-attempting to join the multicast group address, comprising the steps of:

issuing a second join command to the one or more network devices in a second attempt to join the multicast group address;

determining whether any packets are received within a designated time period after the step of issuing a second join command; and

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if any packets are received within the designated time period, determining that the first host is joined to the multicast group address; otherwise, if any packets are not received within the designated time period, determining that the first host is not joined to the multicast group address.

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11. (Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of issuing a leave command comprises, sending an IGMP Leave message to one or more network devices.

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12. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the step of determining whether any packets are received within a designated time period comprises the steps of:
starting a timer having a predetermined expiration time; and
determining whether any packets addressed to the multicast group address are received by the first host before the predetermined expiration time.

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14. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising, if the second host is determined to not be joined to the first multicast group address,
issuing, by the second host, a leave command to the one or more network devices; and re-attempting to join the first multicast group address, comprising:
issuing, by the second host, a second join command to the one or more network devices in a second attempt to join the first multicast group address;
determining whether any packets are received by the second host within a designated time period associated with the second attempt; and
if any packets are received by the second host within the designated time period, determining that the second host is joined to the first multicast group address; otherwise, if any packets are not received by the second host within the designated time period, determining that the second host is not joined to the first multicast group address.

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15. (Twice Amended) A method comprising:
sending, from a controller to a first and second host desiring to participate in a point-to-point call, a first and second multicast group address;

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sending, from the first host to one or more network devices, one or more packets addressed to the first multicast group address;

issuing, by the second host, a join command to the one or more network devices in an attempt to join the first multicast group address;

determining whether any packets are received by the second host within a designated time period associated with the attempt; and

if any packets are received by the second host within the designated time period, determining that the second host is joined to the first multicast group address; otherwise, if any packets are not received by the second host within the designated time period, determining that the second host is not joined to the first multicast group address;

sending, from the second host to one or more network devices, packets addressed to the second multicast group address;

issuing, by the first host, a join command to the one or more network devices in an attempt to join the second multicast group address;

determining whether any packets are received by the first host within a designated time period associated with the attempt; and

if any packets are received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is joined to the second multicast group address; otherwise, if any packets are not received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is not joined to the second multicast group address.

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16. (Amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising, if the first host is determined to not be joined to the second multicast group address,

issuing, by the first host, a leave command to the one or more network devices; and re-attempting to join the second multicast group address, comprising:

issuing, by the first host, a second join command to the one or more network devices in a second attempt to join the second multicast group address;

determining whether any packets are received by the first host within a designated time period associated with the second attempt; and

if any packets are received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is joined to the second multicast group address; otherwise,

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if any packets are not received by the first host within the designated time period, determining that the first host is not joined to the second multicast group address.

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17. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the packet comprises one of test packet and payload.

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22. (Twice Amended) A communication system comprising:

a controller being operable to identify a multicast group address to be used for distributing packet information to participating host devices;

a packet network for distributing the multicast group address to the participating host devices, the packet network being adapted to set up a multicast distribution tree between participating devices having successfully joined the multicast group address; and

means for determining whether the participating host devices have joined the multicast group address based on whether the participating host devices receive any packets on the multicast group address before expiration of a designated time period.

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Add the following new claim(s):

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23. (New) The method of claim 2 wherein the first and second hosts are selected from the group consisting of: a portable wireless communication device, a mobile wireless communication device, a wire-line communication device, a wireless console, a wire-line console, a repeater, a site controller, a comparator, a telephone interconnect device, an internet protocol telephony device, a call logger, a scanner and a gateway.

24. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein the participating host devices are selected from a group consisting of: a portable wireless communication device, a mobile wireless communication device, a wire-line communication device, a wireless console, a wire-line console, a repeater, a site controller, a comparator, a telephone interconnect device, an internet protocol telephony device, a call logger, a scanner and a gateway.